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Harcourt. Sherrin.



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Caen.

METHOUGHT, once more within my Island home,
I saw some city of my native land,
When from the open casement, dear to Art,
Where still LE VARDOIS loves to deck the page
With breathing forms, sweet rills and waving trees,
With ruins hoar and uplands of *Vaucelles*,
Fair CAEN uprose before my wondering gaze.

High on its sovereign hill the *Abbey* soared,
Where holy Charity her vigil keeps
By meek Matilda's grave, and opens wide
Her portals to all comers, doing deeds
That rise like incense round the throne of Heaven.

Like spears that fill the great Archangel's hand,
Or fingers pointing to the Eternal Home,
The mid-day sun lit up with liquid gold,
The sister-spires that mark th' historic site,
Where troublous William sleeps, Life's fever o'er.
Its radiance streamed, with that mysterious sheen,

Which lustrous gems and glowing jewels cast,
O'er tower and turret, pinnacle and foil,
Through flashing lights and panes of carved stone ;
O'er steeples piled as strong as adamant,
By Titans wrought, but light as diadems,
Up borne by angel-hands above the shrine,
Or veils of lace-work, intricately wove
To deck the Holiest on some festal day.

By you far road, where once a forest spread
Umbrageous gloom, and filled th' odorous air
With scents of blossoms snowy-white — a screen
Erst interposed between the haunts of men
And *Ardaines'* cloistral calm — with pomp of war
Great EDWARD marched. On those broad verdant plains
Which Orne still laves and fills the frequent fosse,
Camped HENRY's host. Within you frowning walls,
Where once DU GUESCLIN kept his martial state,
The craven JOHN in gloomy dalliance wooed
Fair Isabel, the flower of Angoulême,
Till on his startled ear — amid the feast —
The war-trump pealed, and, from the dastard rent,
PHILIP restored to France her faithful CAEN.

May war no more profane thy peaceful streets,
Nor, what the locusts spared, the spoiler glean ;
No more may bigot-hate, nor civil fend
Thy laughter turn to tears, nor ashes pour

Upon thy beauty. No! may commerce fill
Thy busy port with sails from every clime!
May Learning yet, in thy young Academe, —
Than mother fair a daughter fairer far, —
Among thy children, emulous, revive
Thy Huet's lore, thy Malherbe's flowing verse.
Plenty and Peace be thine! each circling year,
With blessing crowned — approve thine ancient boast,
Thy sons all brave, thy daughters chaste as fair!

But while then wouldst outvie thy former state,
Nor stand a laggard in this work-day world,
Oh! yet give back to HIM, *Who* gave thee all,
Food, light, and being, richly to enjoy,
The ruined altar of St. Nicholas,
St. Sauveur's aisles, St. Stephen's broken shrine!

Forbid the crime to rash intrusive hands,
To lay in dust thine honours of old Time,
Mansions and towers, along whose sculptured fronts
Thy Fathers wrote thy story, graven deep
In thine own peerless stone, lest strangers come
To gaze and turn to weep, when not a wreck
Of all that priceless glory shall survive.
Speak, timely wise; and stay the Vandal's axe,
Or thou shalt be a byeword to the world!
Speak with a voice of power! till men shall hear,
Cry in thy streets and desecrated courts!

Then for thy witching beauty — stately CAEN!
Bright City of the plain — the verdant land
Of church and castle — pilgrims to and fro
Shall pass upon the earth, awhile to search
Thy things of fame, memorials of the Past ;
Thy glancing river, tremulously gay
With thousand dimpling smiles ; thy pleasant leas ;
Thy groves of softest green, oft filled with songs
Of wood-note wild ; rich gardens, happy homes,
And long-drawn galleries dedicate to Art.

Still year by year, thy gates shall welcome in
An ever-growing crowd of strangers, led
By those two beacon-names, that spread thy fame,
Art's faithful priests — Religion's duteous sons —
By BOUET's pencil, and TREBUTIEN's pen !

MACKENZIE E. C. WALCOTT. M. A.


Humbly's Hotel.

Caen. Sept.

1860.

CAEN :

Domin, Printer, Hôtel des Monnaies.



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